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1920

CANDLE LIGHTS

GRACE KIRKLAND



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CANDLE LIGHTS

BY
GRACE KIRKLAND
1920

THE A. B. CALDWELL PUBLISHING COMPANY
Atlanta

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ATLANTA

We know no Greece but Athens, no Italy but Rome,
For it must be that every race shall call some city
home;
As it endured in splendor, or heard its final knell,
We know that nation only as its city rose or fell.

Yes, I have seen your heavens, garishly blue and gold,
Or black as a pierced pall through which the stars stare, far
and cold;
But best I love my city's smoke, that softens the glaring sun,
And glows like a veil of smouldering fire as soon as the day
is done.

O City, City, City! Mahomet turned his eyes,
Lest fair Damascus woo him from his destined Para-
dise!

Yes, I have seen your mountains, touched by the sunset's
light,
But have you seen my sky-line in the winter's early night?
Ranges of glass and marble, ribbed with the flawless steel;
Grand are your Alps, I grant you. But mine are the peaks
that feel!

O City, City, City! O heart of the world's desire,
Be you New York or London Town or Babylon or Tyre!

Yes, I have seen your woodlands, dyed in their opal hues,
But have you watched the colors that swirl on my avenues?
A rainbow that breaks and re-gathers, a rainbow that
dartles and swerves,
Here it is vivid and slender; yonder it widens and curves.

O City, City, City! O mistress of all charms!
Your loveliness has drawn the strength of ages to your
arms.

Yes, I have heard your whispering pines, and harked to the
breakers' pound,
When the sea rolled high and angry; but hear you my city's
sound?
Oh, it is matchless music! What wind, what wave, has
notes
Like that roar of tangled traffic and the cry from myriad
throats?

O City, City, City! O Pleasure, Wrong and Pain!
Ten thousand souls shall worship for each thousand
souls you've slain!

We know no Greece but Athens, no Italy but Rome;
For it must be that everyone shall call some city
home;
And glad am I, and proud am I to be a loyal thrall
To that which crowns the Georgia hills. Atlanta
over all!

MAY

Violets purpling the path, and the Cherokee roses a-cluster,
Beneath the magnolias, rich with their perfumed, wax lus-
tre;
Nearby, the wood-bine and vine and sweet shrub intertwin-
ing,
While over it all the translucent shell of our Georgia moon
shining.

Never a May quite like this, as tho' each had withheld some
perfection,
To dower a spring scarce of earth that brings to us Hope's
full election;
Great is the victory, dear, to have patiently waited our Day!
Too great to be dimmed by a tear, though it pass with the
passing of May.

AWAY

Away from me? Not when all nature must
Link me in thought with something that you are—
Whether it be the silver-gleaming star,
Or feeble fleck or unconsidered dust.

Away from me? Not since I search each glance
To find to yours some stray similitude
In form or feature; or a transient mood,
Like one of yours in some old circumstance;

I will not lower love by stilted art,
Which skirts the humble as a thing profane;
Nor set, with affectation's feigned disdain,
The homely human from yourself apart.

I cannot judge the richness that you gave,
Weigh, without scales, or measure, without line:
Perhaps some pain that made me more divine,
Perchance some error justice made me waive;

Or it might be some artless, whimsic jest
That, lingering in a smile, has birthed me friends;
Are any trifles small—before their ends?
Not until death we gauge the worst—the best.

Ah, dear! To every sweetheart is the boon
Which bids the blossoms speak; and plays the sea
A fine diapason . . . In this, no mystery
Beyond a man, a maid, a mischief moon!

Proof of your presence is—some blunder due
To dreaming; and that blessed loss of loss,
No matter what the barriers stretched across,
Which holds within my heart the sense of you!

When every tiniest detail of the day,
Reminds me that my own is still my own,
How could I ever feel myself alone?
Even through death—you would not be away.

MINE ADVERSARY SLEEPS

Mine adversary sleeps:

How strange!

How like a tired child's, his face!

The far, long range

Of hunt and battle leave no trace,

Of all I thought him.

Through tiger years

We tore each other . . . Fled a space

To heal our wounds, and nurture strength for

Further pain and tears;

Fiendlike—I fought him,

Hurting myself the more,

For every blow

Fell on my heart's own core . . .

I loved him so!

Where is the hate?

Forgot?

These furrows on his brow portray it not;

These lines show care

And love—such love as breaks the heart;

O Israfel fair,

Long had I begged that I might first depart,

Yet you sought him;

Suffered he more than I?

Ah, bitter fate!

All was a monstrous lie!

What has death brought him?

Did he, too, feign?

Now he has come to die,

Knows he my pain?

Why were we blind?

Ruinous pride!

Had we been kind,

Each yielding—he had not died

Of woes I wrought him.

O tragedy of those who cannot trust!

Whose enmity is love's excess gone mad!

Yet hush . . . he is not dust . . .

Upon his lips there steals a smile of pride

For what death taught him.

WAITING

Within the grate the genial embers sink,
With sound like first faint foot-falls on my ear;
How like your spurred boots' far betraying clink—
My dear, my dear!

A friendly branch taps gaily at the door,
As if assured of welcome fast and fine;
I run to turn the knob, as oft of yore,
O love of mine!

The flickering gas-light flushes now, or fleers,
And often whispers in soft monotone;
Almost it seems your very breathing nears—
My own, my own!

I do not comprehend. That worm of war,
Of which you are a millionth writhing part,
Crawls where I cannot follow any more,
Sweetheart, sweetheart!

I have no fear, who used to pale with dread
If you but journeyed one familiar mile;
I cannot weep, who had weak tears to shed,
When you were gone awhile;

You live—somewhere. That sense is given me,
Because you hold my life within your hand;
That meaning of great things across the sea,
I do not understand.

Stark loneliness, with sudden agonies,
When tricks entice my joy and then betray!
They tell me mourners learn to suffer these,
Beloved, always?

Nay: I should know the instant that you fell:
And swift as light my unbound soul would dart
To join yours as it entered Heaven—or Hell!
Heart of my heart.

ON AN ANNIVERSARY

Along the cord of constancy,
The jewel-years have slipped;
And Love is conning her rosary
Over, reverent-lipped;
 Soft is the sheen the gems reflect,
 In the light of a tender retrospect;
Tho' each has been pierced by an agony—
 For the thread was sorrow-tipped.

Now as the latest glowing stone,
Glides silently to its place,
Love perceives her rosary grown
Into a strand of priceless grace;
 If you were mutable, precious years,
 Crystals of laughter and shimmering tears,
Love would not change you: no, not one,
 One pain carved facet efface.

Glimmering treasures of reverie,
Drops of solidified light,
From a supernal rosary
That shines on Love's breast tonight;
 And out of an opaline past of dreams,
 With diamond sparkles and starry gleams,
There flashes a rainbow promise bright
 Of immortality.

MORE GUILTY

Not to be reckoned as the world's worst knave,
 He who is guilty of a purposed sin;
But he whose pampered listlessness has been
 As cold and unresponsive as the grave.

RETROGRESSION

Like one within a forest lost,
 Whose circling steps his path retrace,
Despairing at the wasted cost,
 While resting at the starting place:

So fares my futile, fickle heart,
 Broken and bruised and thorn-torn through,
Only to find each vain new start
 But brings me back to you.

Patient and kind—or cruel sure?
 You wait, as waits the forest **range**,
Till failing hope shall no more lure,
 And weakness seek no change.

Had you but held me close—at first—
 Or had you helped me straightly go—
I had not known the best—the worst—
 A wanderer comes to know.

Nor had I grieved because you wait,
 As lightness mourns a faith too strong;
I had not felt a flash of hate
 Toward love that bideth over-long!

Yet, at the last, there may in grief
 Be born a rapture, in one breath,
Even as a dull-hued forest leaf
 Flames blood-red at the touch of death.

THE LITTLE COUNTRY TOWN

O I am one of those who love the humble little country towns,

The little country towns that sprawl on either side the railroad track

At which you cast a worldly smile, the while a lady quickly frowns,

As the train rolls by the station and you're glancing idly back.

Just a depot and a blacksmith shop, perhaps a dingy store or two,

Some dwellings scattered lazily upon a winding road;

The square, where droops a patient tree above a bed of fever-few,

A red-wheeled buggy swerving past a mule team with its heavy load.

You wonder, on your onward way, how we can live in such a place,

Where either dust is thickly spread, or rain is pouring torrents down;

You say there's not a spot in all the world but has its charm and grace,

Save only this: the dismal, dull, neglected little country town.

You do not see that those who love the tranquil little country town,

Must grow within themselves the things which make of life its real worth;

That here the urge of purposes that keep mankind from sinking down

To savage isolation, or to urban ruck, have birth.

For it must be when silent men in solitary grip contend
With rigid earth and nature stark, they've frequent
need to go

To handy little country towns, where friend may clasp the
hand of friend,

And kindle at the kindly sparks which rise from social
glow.

And greater the top-lofty need of cities, rootless, blind
With fierceness and with folly, for small towns to give
them pause;

To keep in check the combat where men battle with their
kind,

And hold against their hectic sway the sword of saner
laws.

Within the country towns is held the balance of the nation;
'Twixt parasitic getting and toil's unconsidered giving;
And I am glad to dwell where things are seen in true rela-
tion,

Where men have time to understand Life's basic reason
—living!

THE GLEAM

The grey day gloomed its way to night;

One cloud dissolved; one star shone through;

Thus wore my life without celestial light

Till love dispelled the dark and brought me—you!

RENUNCIATION

When eager, anguished love had far outflown
All diffidence, how fervidly I strove
In prayer that there would one day meet my own,
His answering love!

So blind my selfishness had been! But soon
My stricken heart made piteous plea: "Forgive
Lord, such presumption! Grant Thou but this boon—
That he may live."

How cruel still was love! Thou knowest best.
My chastened spirit, prone, has learned to weep:
"Hold not my darling longer from his rest;
Give Thy beloved—Sleep!"

JESSAMINE

Once, e'er a jasmine bud perished,
Wax-petaled, perfumed and white,
You plucked it for me; and I cherished,
'Til it grew, in my dream of delight—
As if it had heard the old story you told!
To a bloom like a rose of the Cloth-of-Gold.

Sweet, in some desolate hour,
When hope shall be pale in your breast,
Remember the magical flower
Which proved that Love's nurture is best;
And our ideals, pallid and cold,
Shall revive like a rose of the Cloth-of-Gold.

THE PLAY IS DONE

Now I must mount the peaks of pain,
Where Death contests the height,
And you alone my soul sustain,
You only brave the fight:

And this is cost to make me see
Why that you would not woo
On terms of witless mummery,
The woman meant for you.

Carved cupids, with their gilded smiles,
Adorned my stucco throne,
Whereon I sought, with peacock wiles,
To make Romance my own;

In that sham spirit I received,
False courtier swore false vow;
Alike deceiving and deceived,
We played at love, till now—

I pitch the puppet crown aside,
The spangled robe's pretence!
Henceforth your mantle's modest pride,
Henceforth your firm defence.

Tonight, we ride where lightning rips
At the roots of certitude:
No place is here for the painted lips
With the lies of a mimic mood!

Though I may falter at the worst,
Or grievous pang turn pale,
You knew my weakness from the first;
You will not let me fail!

'T is worth all cost that makes me know
Your scorn of the gewgaw gain,
While you saved your strength against my woe,
Your kiss for the brow of pain!

TO RUSSIA

O thou Eternal Land of Snow!

 Could I but form a diadem,
Fit for the brow of ye who know
How other nations come and go—
The greatest and the least of them—
 My heart would leap for joy; but no,
 I simply kiss thy garment's hem.

Yet spurn this not from one whose eyes
 Have looked with love across the sea,
To worship what the fools despise,
A coming people, strong and wise,
To whom the world must bow the knee,
 The while its pygmies, in surprise
 And awe, shall one day lean on thee.

O Russia! Venom tongues their slime
 Have spewed at thee for centuries long;
While silent, in thy frozen clime,
Ye heard their puny little rhyme,
Trail trembling through their battle song:
 But come ye now, in God's good time,
 Invincibly to right that wrong!

How many times ye stood on guard—
 White Bear that held the pack at bay!
How many times thy knightly sword
Hath flashed at any peril toward
Some alien land and far away,
 Yet needing thine unfaltering word:
 "Back, wolves! Her rights ye shall not slay!"

And have ye faults? The punished brute,
 The traitor and the coward cheat,
The thief and robber, foiled of loot,
The jackal tingling from thy boot,
And mongrel hordes, in swift retreat,
 All such, in lies, thy "horrors" hoot,
 Yet know thee as their sure defeat.

I have no sword, nor influence,
Nor anything of power or grace,
Save still to cling, in reverence,
To righteousness and innocence,
And view the truth with fearless face:
Yet humbly, from an ingrate race,
One voice shall speak in thy defence!

SEASONAL

Like an old man, who has no more the heart
To claim a lusty prime beyond his part,
Grey February waits the birth of Spring,
With pity, only, for that new-born thing.

Its soul, upon the winds of March will cry,
Striving to tell the whence it came, and why;
Bearing the Message every Spring before
Brought, all unheeded; till it tries no more

And April's tears efface. Then, on in play
To catch the first bright butterfly of May;
June buds a rose of dream, which blows apace,
Of which July holds but a fragrant trace.

The suns of August and September smile
Away the dream for seeming reals worth while;
October spills a wealth of fairy gold
That turns to ashes at November's cold;

Though strong December, radiantly pure,
Reflects the white stars' glittering allure,
And January rules, like sceptered age,
With Calm and Poise for courtier and page.

But February, feeble on its throne,
Gives to the stir of quickened earth—a moan.
One cycle wanes, another dawns. Forlorn,
Forgotten, dies. And Spring is born!

“ASK ME NO MORE”

“Ask me no more. The moon may draw the sea—”
The sea, so strong? The moon, so cold and pale?
Think how the splendor of your sun moves me,
So lonely, frail!

“Ask me no more.” Your lips the lotus steep;
Your storm-black eyes show smouldering golden fire;
When, dreaming of perfection, Music sleeps,
Your voice is her desire.

“Ask me no more.” Your veins are nectar filled,
And pulse with passion primal as the surge
That builds and wrecks, unchallenged and self-willed,
Wild as the Cosmic urge!

“Ask me no more.” Defenseless and at bay,
I plead for what I cannot else obtain:—
A sacred memory that you smiled one day,
But passed, and left no pain.

* * *

“Ask me no more?” How coward customs crave
Approval by Presumption’s petty rules!
Renunciation proffers to the brave
The cap of fools,—

And Dead Sea fruit,—Convention’s tinkling bell:
A death-in-life whose only piteous worth
Is suffering hells for very fear of Hell,
When clay returns to earth.

“Ask me no more!” Nay, laugh at the alarms,
While still I mourn that moment of delay
Which questioned if the glory of your arms
Is worth the price I pay!

OF SUCH.

He who hath a little child to love,
Hath drift of dawn on heights above;
The mystery of life within his hand;
A light to lead him to an holy land;

He who hath had a little child to die,
Soundeth the depth of human agony;
Gropeth in dimness ever toward that ray
Whose fading took the brightness from his day;

Yet, as the disappointing years wear on,
A memory so pure, personified,
Brings the strange sense that everything has gone,
Except the changeless little child who died.

LORD OF MY LIFE TODAY

“We Can’t Live Yesterday, nor Tomorrow.”

. . . . Then, be thou Lord of Life, today!
No dusty Past shall dare
Pursue us on the lustral way
Our winged sandals fare.

Be thou my Lord of Life, today,
Nor shall tomorrow meet,
But ever flee adown the way
Before our heedless feet.

Be thou the Lord of Life, today,
And frowning gods of wrath,
By fluted lips of those full fey
Be blown from out our path!

. . . . The Past, the Future, Chance or Fate,
Rights, Wrongs—what matter they?
We laugh at threat of Death and Hate—
Lord of my Life, today.

NARCOSIS

'There was a path I shrank from; grewsome it lay,
All foul with dankness from the swamps of death;
'The very night winds skirted wide that way,
Reluctant to bear on its torpid breath.

But that of bidding lips and speech that did beguile,
Clung to my side, and clinging, urged the while:

"Beyond, there lie such wondrous things," it said;
"Surcease from sorrow; joy tho' hope be dead;
What has the world to offer in your eyes?
'Regret, remorse!' Go thither and grow wise."

So fearsomely, with feeble steps, I then advanced,
Till, far within that spot, I stood entranced;
My griefs had drifted from me; and I knew
That all the pleasant promises were true.

The land was new and strange, but dreamy fair,
With fragrance of the lotus in the air;
While all the backward way was from my gaze
Shrouded as with a soft and slumbrous haze.

Here was the laughter very low; and no one seemed to weep;
'The past had perished gently as a babe might fall asleep.

Then tempt me not to hope, who have such peace;
And spur me not to effort, who would rest;
Your Paradise has not such sure release
From pain as have I in this place unblessed.

THE WANING

When you forget what you vowed to recall,
When you discard what you swore to retain,
When you are deaf to slow, dying fall
Of a music that never shall stir you again.

It will be far from my purpose to sue
For a pseudo-sweet seeming that poses for leal,
Since I shall have guessed, long ago; and I, too,
May be ready for passionless rest in the real.

MOTIF

The maiden at her 'broidery frame,
Hums low beneath her breath a name,
While brighter than her silken thread,
The fancies flitting thro' her head.

The matron weaves, with warp and woof,
The **tendresse** of a happy roof,
And as her busy fingers fly,
Blends love songs to a lullaby.

The Grandmere, as her needles glance,
Knits with her lace some old romance,
While gentler grows her faded face,
With memories of its ancient grace.

* * * *

Ah, ladies of old time and ways,
Who speak from out the yesterdays,
In relics of the work you wrought,
Made fairer by the hidden thought,

Your daughters of this bolder age,
Like men, in every plan engage;
But find no pattern true and fine,
Unless Love stamp the full design.

PATRIOTISM

Many the loves which stir the human tides,
Moving to action, changing hour to hour;
Yet it must be one motive over-rides
All else, by its unalterable power.

Each chooses. There's the fellowhood of man,
Of race, of creed. Their battle-cry will rouse
A million echoes. And the call of clan
Is answered. Each old name and house

Has its adherents. Blood-ties bind like steel:
Mother and child. The love of man and bride;
All that the poet sings the hearers feel,
Acknowledging the song is justified.

Each to his own allegiance and ideals,
Choosing that which should be supremely great,
Unquestioned. All my soul in worship kneels
Before the shrine of Georgia. O my State!

FEAR

Lone in the House of Grief, long time I stayed,
Indifferent, scornful, saw the grim
Black festoons formed of shadows fold the dim,
Still halls in swaying, wierdly wrought brocade,
Velutinous, impalpable. Unafraid
Felt on my brow the cold impress of slim,
Dead fingers. Watched the ghostly glim
Of flickering lights and mocked them, undismayed.

But now we dwell within Joy's own abode,
And terror weighs me as a heavy load;
What if, some tragic day, I'd come to miss
The eagerness I now feel in your kiss?
And while you sleep, I gaze upon your face,
In anguish lest it show some frightening trace.

“THE WIREGRASS”

Once knelt a prophet at the Throne of Grace,
(Foreseeing peoples smitten, homes laid waste,
Temples destroyed and fields by war effaced),
And prayed the Master make some refuge place:

“Put skies above it, blue and warm and sweet,
For cold is cruel to the poorly dressed;
Spread grassy beds to soothe the wanderers’ rest,
And soft, bright sand for children’s naked feet;

Grow them great trees that will outvie the mines
In treasure for the needs of pioneers,
While the wind’s choir to their reverent ears
Sings of Your mercy through the fragrant pines;

Give them calm streams with currents cool and clear,
And gracious rains to bless the hopeful toil
That draws unhurried harvests from the soil:
And let all things be filled with kindly cheer!”

“You ask me much,” the Master smiled. “Alas!
Long since I built that Paradise on earth
But men are slow to realize its worth,
And pass it by. Behold, the Wiregrass!”

OBLATION

If one should search my muddied spirit through,
Seeking some diamond fragments in the dust,
Broken and crushed and soiled beneath the crust,
But still a part of God’s own flame and dew,
He’d find my pure and fearless faith in you—
Only my faith in you.

THE FREE-LANCE

Dream not that wounds sustained at your behest,
Beyond all doubt do loyalty portray;
Although my heart seem by your cause obsessed,
It merely revels in the fervid fray.

Yea, this is why no love have I professed,
But let my silence mock your soft display;
I wonder if you dimly ever guessed
That I one day would lightly ride away?

Grieve not that now I stifle in your grace—
For favors do but prompt me to betray!
I toss your guerdons in your placid face—
Can goods or gauds this restiveness allay?

The tang of intrigue, or the pride of race—
These only might affix me to your sway;
I know not thrall of person or of place;
My joy, the jousting, and my lust, to slay!

ASHES OF ROSES

A rose there was—and lovelier never blew!
In panoply of state it had its part;
Then, when it faded, tenderly I drew
It 'neath my vestments, closer to my heart.

A wife there was—and sweeter never smiled!
(Why failed she in my manhood's prime and pride?)
Yet tho' they mock the timid, grey haired child,
I faster hold my little faded bride.

APPLE BLOSSOMS

Pearl, with each petal plashed crimson—and you
Marvelled no magic had blended the twain
To the pellucid pink of the peach; when the rain
Sprayed the verdure with crystals, or as the dew
Beaded the apple-bloom chalice, it drew
What seemed a fresh drop of blood from each stain;
Alas! And I felt that your sigh at the pain
Of a flower proved your soul to be tenderly true!

. . . What was the year that those apple-buds blew?
I shall not look on their budding again:
Nevermore wait, 'neath the orchard trees fain
For a love full as willing to wound as to woo;
Yet I know, from the breast where your red lips have
lain,
Why the apple-blooms, opening to spring, bleed anew!

EXTINGUISHED

Heart-of-my-heart, that failed me,
Love-of-my-life, grown cold,
What has the dream availed me,
Now that my heart is old?

Where are the moods that made me
One with the gods afar,
Raptured and captured and swayed me
As the Dusk's fingers prison the star?

Yea, in the darkness you found me,
And flamed at your clasp all my heart;
Again let the blackness surround me,
Since you, and my faith, depart.

SPRING IN DIXIE

Soft music, rising higher,
Throbbing with unguessed desire,
 Smile on lovely mouth:
Sleeping Beauty, at a kiss,
Stirs from dreams to waking bliss;
 Spring in the South!
Skies tinted deeper blues,
Woods touched to greener hues,
 Love guides the Artist's hand;
Light sends a purer ray
Athwart a perfect May
 In Dixie land.

Sweetness that grows more rare,
Fairness but made more fair;
 How may we greet
That which held all of worth,
God gave to bless His earth,
 Made more complete?
Lacked we not anything,
Sunshine or blossoming,
 Glad, buoyant breeze;
Roses by rain caressed,
Gay streams and unsuppressed,
 Friendly strong trees.

Our hearts had held before
Joys that could bear no more;
 Now do they ache,
Bursting with fresh delight,
Beauty so full, so bright—
 That they must break!
Alter us from ourselves,
Change us to sprites and elves!
 Fairy and pixie
Only can fit the scene
When Spring is crowned our queen
 'Way down in Dixie!

SPINNING SONG

Ah, Laddie, there's some one your heart must be weaning
 Away from the lass that you left with a vow;
How else could your ears be so deaf to my keening,
 Throughout the drear nights when I weep for you now?
The sod of our country was slow in its greening,
 Yet spring is long spent; and the ships, as they come,
Leave never a message to show that you're leaning
 Or longing at all toward the sweetheart at home.

Ah, Laddie, aroon, as I sit at my spinning,
 I weave, with my flax, many fancies the day;
And I wonder sometimes if 't is terrible sinning
 That your face seems to lurk in each bead as I pray.
As the blythe Shannon springs from its sprightly begin-
 ning,
 With dimples and smiles, till 't is lost in the bay,
So my thoughts ripple over your wooing and winning,
 But to sink in that sorrowful sigh—you're away!

Just the dull, drifting days with the wheel's weary whirring,
 The heather-blue nights brooding over the sea,
While the hope of each dawn meets the twilight's deferring,
 And the hurt, Oh, the hurt, at your silence, machree!
In your wondrous new world, there is happiness stirring,
 But pain's in my heart, sharp as thorns on yon tree;
He may go, she must bide. 'T is the old rule recurring,
 That portions despair and the distaff to me.

WHEN WE HAVE SAID GOOD-BYE

The sunset plumes shall deck the purpling west,
In pomp of splendid cloud on royal sky ;
The roads and woods we knew and loved the best
Shall be by faint and tender breeze caressed
When we have said good-bye.

The fragrance of the jessamine will swoon
Through the still night, its rich perfume will vie
With honeysuckle and magnolia bloom,
'Til morning come, as once for us, too soon,
When we have said good-bye.

Across the vault of heaven in lace-like foam
The star-shine of the Milky Way shall lie,
One changeless thing of comfort, when I roam
Far from a wormwood mockery of home,
And we have said good-bye.

The sun's kiss on the south shall be as bright,
As green shall be the wheat fields and the rye ;
While the long lanes shall wait for us bedight
With ferns and flowers and soft summer light,
When we have said good-bye.

Yet, for us, all these things shall henceforth be
Seen through a mist of tears, with choking sigh :
Full well I know your own heart, achingly,
Shall feel the stab of myriad memory,
When we have said good-bye.

Vain, now, my warning and reproachful tears ;
Go! Pride sufficeth ; and your bitter cry,
When you have shed the superstitious fears
That wrecked our pure Arcadia of the years
And bade you say good-bye.

The woven fabric of our lives in twain
Is rent. To what avail? We soon must lie
Where nevermore the sunshine or the rain
May see us, laughing, hand in hand again,
When we have said good-bye.

Ah, love, the years' oncreeping will be slow
Without you. Dumb with grief I long to die.
That, dead, I may forget I let you go,
And never wake, in weary pain, to know
That we have said good-bye.

DAWN

O Life, thy days are many hours too long!
Yet tonic noon, like a bluff friend, means well,
Whose grief-defying challenge rings: "Rebel!
Shame on self-pitying tears! To work! Be strong!"
—Night hath its revelry,—its wine and song,
Prelude to sodden sleep; perchance a spell
Be woven of lovely dreams that faintly tell
Of happiness sequestered from all wrong;

* * * * *

But Oh, the innocent, the cruel dawn,
That sports, a thoughtless child, with fresh-roused pain,
And, mischief-loving, bids us to partake
Of unforgotten joy forever gone!
—Each radiant, mocking morn we sob again:
"Why **must** we wake, who had no wish to wake?"

THE PASSING

Not when the ebb-tide trembles on the deep,
And in a languid refluece, like a maid
Who softly smoothes the ripples from her braid,
Uncurls the sea-weed from its stony keep,
Not then, sweetheart, to sleep;

Not when the sunset's faintly glowing bars—
A reminiscence of departed dawn—
Grow silver-chill beneath the frost of stars,
And mortuary night-winds gently mourn,
Not then, love, to pass on;

Not when the world may bid the calm repose,
The quiet, well-earned rest. When ties are frail
As waxen fingers, whence the flushing rose
Has faded wholly, and the pulse is pale,
And memory feebly goes

Back on a slender pathway thro' the maze
Of Real and Seeming, wavering in a blend
Of shadowy Now and blurred, dim Yesterdays,
The slow beginning of the slow, sad end,
Not so to pass, my friend,

But, when the tide of life in strongest flood,
Beats the full-bosomed waves against the rocks,
When the compelling passion in the blood
Leaps lustily to meet the mighty shocks,
Then, death to crown the good!

While Heart exults in reaching Heart's Desire;
When Light O' Wing pursues the flight of Truth;
The blaze still bursts from out volcanic fire,
And lips and eyes reveal a reckless youth,
Thus, only, to expire.

To lead the lists, and leave result to trust;
For ride behind—We feel their panting breath—
Those who will snatch our banner from the dust,
And save the dripping sword from shameful rust,
When flashes forth the swift, sweet wound of death,
Yea, love, **the warrior's death!**

“AND ONE CLEAR CALL FOR ME”

My soul is slipping its leash tonight;
 (Men will say that I rashly died!)
But you floated adown the moon-path white,
 Down the clear moon-path, where the sea is wide;
You were veiled in diaphanous fair samite,
 And called me to your side.

I had thought you lost in a formless mist,
 Since the clay entombed your grace;
So I only clung to your grave, and kissed
The violets that flushed it with amethyst,
And kept with my grief alone a tryst,
 Above your waxen face.

O Love that I mourned so long and deep
 While you dreamed in Paradise,
You have waked at last from your silent sleep,
 With a bloomy dawn in your radiant eyes,
And tonight a troth with my Love I keep
 On the moon-path to the skies!

MY HILLS

“God gave all men all earth to love,
But since their hearts are small,
Ordained for each one place should prove
Beloved over all.”

Then, since my heart is very small,
By pain so long compressed,
Into one corner let me crawl,
Hid in the Red Hills' nest.

Surely this much the fates will give—
The Georgia sod, the Georgia sky,
To walk between them while I live,
And sleep beneath them when I die.

My hills are red as the Robin's breast,
Dark their pines as her wings outspread;
And here alone does my longing rest,
And here I lay my head.

The bold and care-free, they may scale,
The stark, white peaks; contest the seas,
Or thread some horrid jungle trail
In quest of victories,

But let me bide where the Old is New,
Where the New vibrates with memory's thrills,
And soul content grows with each view
That light and love show on the hills.

Blithe and soft as the Robin's wings,
Warm and red as the Robin's breast,
Are my hills: And my spirit ever clings
To their tender strength and rest.

ADIEU

The tie of comradeship that sensed no breaking,
Loosed at the touch of one perfidious hour;
Alone, unbound, in freedom of your making,
I pay no tribute tears to shattered power,
But wander, where no search will e'er discover,
And leave your sullied conscience—to forget!
Nor waste one sigh on weak, recreant lover,
My scorn too perfect even for regret.

You were too vain to guess that the maternal
Only, had met your need, the while my eyes
Looked ever downward, that no glad, supernal
Light might allure them to some fairer skies.
The wonder of a wider world is growing
Beyond the palisades of patient pain;
Of what your heart contains I have no knowing—
I search to find the bourne of youth again.

I, who have reaped but sacrifice from serving,
Shall pluck some blossoms of a tardy spring;
I, who have drunk the briny cup, unswerving,
Shall taste the wine that stills remembering!
When you shall wonder what befell me—after—
Know that my hope soared sunward, and a ray
Presaging love and joy and soft, deep laughter,
Fell on my soul—that day I went away.

ENDURANCE

Who spendeth his strength to complain,
Shall fail in the day of the strife;
Who meeteth in silence the woe of his life,
Shall conquer its tempests and pain.

SONG OF THE SERF

It isn't that you mean to be intrusive,
 But, somehow, you are always with me, dear;
It isn't that I care to be exclusive,
 But I can think of no one else, I fear;
You float upon the surface of my vision,
 And hide whatever else the picture holds;
You drift within my dreaming indecision,
 And nothing else my consciousness unfolds.

I try to think, but thoughts turn swift to yearning;
 I strive to plan, but plans are lost in haze;
I would escape, but circles, e'er returning,
 Would bring me back amidst this Merlin maze.
I don't believe you sought to be malicious,
 I would not charge you with an evil spell;
Such fairy magic, ravishing, delicious,
 Was never woven in a fashion fell.

Yet I am fast in fortress of your making,
 Content to be of love a serf in fee;
My heart is yours, for happiness or breaking;
 It's only fear is that it might be free!
And so in roundelay I sing the olden
 Song of a blissful bondage to endure,
Long as the metal of your heart is golden,
 Long as the purpose of my soul be pure.

PATIENCE

Ye who would squeeze fine wine from out the press,
 Learn that long years of nurture must precede
The vintage that shall tempt the lips' caress;
 A wanton summer day matures the weed.

NOVEMBER

I saw a flower that bloomed too late;
 And thought: "It had made glad the spring,
But autumn, withered and sedate,
 Shrinks coldly from the flaunting thing."

I knew a love that came too late;
 And sighed: "How this had gloried youth!
But sweet Illusion cannot mate
 With frigid Fact and ruthless Truth."

Folly is not to be unwise
 When to be foolish fair is good;
But fools are they whose blossoms rise
 In seasons bare of fellowhood.

THE AFTERNOON NAP

I wakened, weary still in limb and brain;
The cool, soft lights and shadows on the lawn
Proclaimed a dreamless night too quickly gone,
For I must rouse, though yet of slumber fain;
Then tediously, while my drowsy sense crept on
Between inchoate hope and vague, dull pain,
Came the clear thought: "Why, this is only wan,
Sweet sunset. I may rightly rest again."

So it must be in death's first troubled hours;
 The body cannot rise for those who weep;
The tired soul yet lacks immortal powers;
 And gently falls the blessing of long sleep.

CHOICE

Our meeting meant a choosing, O my friend:
To cling thenceforth together, you and I,
Through isolated rapture to the end,
Or part, as due the loftier gallantry.

Thy Galahad strength decided. As the sword
Plunged swiftly in a woman's tender breast,
May save from soilure, so thy farewell word
Insures the pierced soul its spotless rest.

WELDED

Justice plead your cause today,
Love a little tiring;
Mercy, too, had gone astray,
Cold to your requiring;
Passion, had it passed that way,
Would have paled in deep dismay!

Justice won your cause. My soul
Comprehends its sentence;
Ringed wrongs must divide the dole
Of prolonged repentance!
Wedlock wears no loose parole,
Linked lives must live out the whole.

Though my heart be frail and light,
Yours is fixed and single;
I would choose the fickle-bright,
You the solemn ingle;
Each must bear the other's blight—
So says Justice and the Right!

A COMFORTER

Ay, better mourn a dead love, lass,
Nor hope to see him more,
Than ken his shadow thro' the glass
Would make you bar the door;

Greet for thy hero, fa'n in fray;
Would that my burning eyes
Might shed the tears to wash away
A grief that I despise;

Thou'rt but a little lassie yet,
Wi' sorrow in thy heart;
But slowly, sweetly ye'll forget
This sair and bitter part;

Whilst I maun meet one in the glen
Who shames the old-time bliss;
And hunger for his lips again—
Then scorn mysel' for this!

For love and hate be matched and strong,
So neither wins the goal;
The heart forgi'es the coward wrong,
But loathes the coward soul;

There—lay thy head upo' my breast,
Ye bonny, wounded thing!
And pray God gi' each what is best
To ease remembering.

CULTURE

One racked his brain, in leisure, for a thought;
The husks of platitudes were his reward;
Another sweated over ceaseless work; he brought
Forth in unselfishness the living word.

RESPONSELESS

If you should call across the interspace,
Pleading your need, to one who met each mood
In that companioned past, e'er solitude
Had set its glacial seal on form and face,

I could not hear. No tone can reach my ears;
From palsied hands, each treasured memory slips;
The dragging dullness of the silent years
Has numbed my pulse and rendered dumb my lips.

You knew not, when you struck, how mad the blow;
The soul thus maimed, must prostrate lie for aye,
So neither love, nor grief, nor prayer you pray,
Can right the wrong. Dear God! **You did not know!**

INTERVAL

In this not hopeless discontent,
Toil, alternate with ease,
With memory's faint refractions bent
By refluencing seas,
I seem to wait with strength unspent
The trend of destinies.

"Halt!" And a troop of marching men,
In serried ranks grows still,
(That rythmed quiver through the train
Bespeaks its splendid drill),
And keen, but patient, waits again
To learn its captain's will;

So I mark time, with eager ear
Alert to catch that cry,
Which shall be mine alone to hear,
Mine only to reply;
My Captain knows I'm waiting here
To march, or fight, or die!

KNIGHT TO LADY

Love may come without a reason,
Like a blue-bird out of season,
Or a butterfly that spreads its vivid wings upon the
snow:

Yet the love that has no reason,
To the heart itself is treason,
For like butterfly and blue-bird it is bound to quickly
go.

Ah, no tears are quite so mournful
As the drops that, shamed and scornful
Fall for love as frail and fragile as the leaves of some
wild rose;
Fading flicker of emotion,
Mocking moon-beam on the ocean,
Just as fleeting and as fickle as the wanton wind that
blows!

But the love that can't be ended,
Indestructible and splendid,
Lifting high its towered glory from foundations un-
mistaken,
Has its basis in our being.
Understandable, clear-seeing:
Thus our love is as are we, dear, fixed in strength that
shan't be shaken;

Were you not from falseness free,
You could scarce be true to me;
Had I not held my conscience clean, what worth were
in me, now?
For love is what the lovers are,
And alien not to character;
So only those who live the faith can sanctify the vow!

THE MOURNER

Out of a kiss and a starry night
And a handful of white, white leaves,
I fashioned a little casket light
To hold my heart that grieves;

I pillowed it soft with dreams of balm,
Caught fast by a fairy veil,
And the winds sang over my heart a psalm,
When the face of the moon was pale;

I covered it thick with memory,
Nailed down with the hopes I wept,
Then buried it deep, where none might see
The grave where my hurt heart slept;

You press that spot with feet like milk,
Nor know what lies beneath,
And I brush it oft with a gown of silk
That folds me as a sheath;

There is no pain within your breast,
Nor heart within my own;
Of the sweets of earth we take the best,
And leave its fools to moan;

* * *

Yet when the night is dark and wild,
From the grave of my heart forlorn,
Comes faint the sob of a watching child—
The wraith of a soul unborn:

O bravely vow: "I have no fear!"
When the heavens roll away,
And speak it loud, lest God should hear
That sob on His judgment day.

TRIBUTE

When I muse in the hour of solitude,
 On the Now and the Used-to-be,
My heart grows warm with gratitude,
 Toward all who have cherished me;
But memory is barbed by woes,
 And black with decay's dry rot;
And I'm debtor more through the wrongs of those
 Who hurt me, or helped me not!

I've a smile for the smile that meets my own,
 A hand for the hand in mine;
An answering cheer for cheer's glad tone,
 A sign for the friendly sign;
But when I measure the things that spur
 The soul on its quest ideal,
I yield most praise to the mongrel cur,
 And the viper at my heel.

I've love for the love that cannot fail,
 Through loyal year on year;
And strength for the strength that will not quail
 In doubt, or grief, or fear;
But when I reckon the debt I owe
 For the gems that crown my lot,
I bow to the secret, or open foe,
 And the coward who—forgot!

When I lift my cup at the board of cheer,
 To drink a truthful toast,
May the sweet wine be for the comrades dear,
 Whose steadfastness I boast;
But when I fling the glass aside,
 To break at the feet of Fate,
Let each fragment ring to the tune of pride,
 A triumph over hate!

EVENSONG

Dearest, the night comes down. We never had our day.
The world so wide, the time so long! Why lingered you
away?

Have you not wept for me, as I have wept for you?
Ah, yes. Tho' absence never changed, nor silence broke, I
knew!

Dust in our hearts for aye, and soon will our flesh be dust;
Empty our arms in loneliness and empty our souls of trust;
Aimlessly wandered apart, wistfully wishing but this:
Sometime, to understand **why**; sometime, one touch, one kiss.

Dearest, the night comes down. We could not have our way:
The world so small, the time so short, its end so near today:
But through the uttermost black, your ghost shall be seek-
ing mine,
Till the limitless void of space be crossed and our spirit
hands entwine.

RECLUSE

Ye who would hold my heart an hostelry,
Depart! And seek ye other cheer than mine;
I weary of your importunity!
The hearth is cold; long since I spilled the wine.

Once to this hermitage there rode a guest
And tarried briefly. Nay, no tale have I—
What boots a woman's sorrow or unrest?
My heart is empty. Prithee, lords, pass by!

THE WARRIOR'S HOME-COMING

“Hasten, sister, to greet thy brother!
Proud this hamlet where he was born!
History's page shall record none other
Higher than he who returns this morn!”

“Glad am I of my brother's greatness;
But worn and spent with heavy care;
Tell him his sister, old and mateless,
Warped and withered, is waiting here!”

“Listen, wife, to that mighty cheering!
Beats not thy heart with untold pride?
Ends thy long vigil: thy lord is nearing,
Eager to own thee at his side!”

“Say to my lord that the maid he married,
Faded and failed through the long, lone years;
Here, by the grave of the babe she buried,
He left her, uncherished, to toil and tears!”

“Mother, rejoice! For the ancient blame
That clings to thy sex hath been relieved;
To have borne such son, thou art meet to claim
The honor and wealth he hath achieved!”

“And prate ye now of blame, to me,
Who suffered the mother-pain and then
Through illness and age and adversity,
Wrought at the work forsaken by men?”

Say to my son that sonless, I:
Widowed his wife: and his sister lost:
The glory of man is but infamy
Who maketh his women to pay its cost!”

CIRCE

Blame me not utterly, nor seal thine ears
In scorn for one whose plea is wet with tears;
All the glad summer ripened by your will,
And now—comes on the winter, and its chill,
Springs from the season's laws. Inscrutable
Is Nature. And her children, mutable.

The fairest things fade fastest. See, the skies
Flame opalescent—yet the sunset dies
While thus we watch. What welder's art could hold
Upon yon silver cloud that rim of gold?
Oh, learn the truth. My heart itself must glow
With swift succeeding loves that burn—and go.

For I am fire and cloud and cannot break
The rules that bind me, even for your sake;
The torch must suffer, when the moth draws toward—
The cloud is slashed by lightning's vibrant sword;
To that, accursed by its own fickleness,
Add no upbraidings for thine own distress!

O love of many loves—how many more
Will heed the siren note and brave the shore?
Another barque is nearing. Pity me
The hapless bond-slave of the changeful sea;
My soul is empty as this singing shell—
And thou hast Circle loved and lost. Farewell.

'WARE TEARS

When diamonds flashed in the buttercup's pit,
A woman smiled wisely: she knew
That what a coquette could not win, by her wit,
She won when she wept in the dew!

THE DREAM CHILD

A little Dream Boy used to dwell with me,
(With eyes dark as his father's were to be)
And tho' his footsteps fell so silently
In my hushed waiting, gave sweet company.

My little Dream Boy vanished, when I knew
That death must change love's virgin rose to rue;
That rare, first rose, just opening to the dew
Of my glad tears, then fading e'er it blew!

Long years have passed since since that Gethsemane:
Tonight, a real child clambers on my knee;
(His eyes are blue as any Northern sea)
And in their depths is wondrous mystery

That links him to that one of long ago—
The Dream Boy, fashioned of hope's early glow.
They seem small spirit brothers now; and so
Which child is dearer, I shall never know.

* * *

Yet when this sentient little lad has grown
Beyond the need of mothering alone,
Perhaps the Boy of Dreams will come and bide,
A child, to linger ever at my side.

A DAY

As might a starveling bend his heavy head
And think with rapture that is fraught with pain:
"Time was Fate granted one whole loaf of bread—
Could such a marvel come to me, again?"
So, in a life so shadowed and so sad,
I muse with rapture that is kin to pain,
Of one whole day your dearness has made glad—
Might such a wonder come to me, again?

S-I-S-S-SSS!

I am waiting in the silence for the slender years to pass,
Like a wavering line of rattlers slithering through the lush
green grass,
While my heavy head droops earthward, bruised by wrong
and serpent-like,
But 'twill lift again, like lightning, when the hour has
come to strike!

Mumble not of meek forgiving—living woe and doing weal,
Once I walked erect in sunshine; now I crawl beneath the
heel
That has crushed, but did not kill me—laughing at my crip-
pled plight!
Think you I shall spare that monster, when the time arrives
to smite?

So—I creep along in darkness, as perchance he crept to me;
And my hiss is like his kisses—soft as Satan's inward glee;
In his hour of pride and triumph, bought by blotting out my
day,
I shall twine once more around him, fix his eyes with mine—
and SLAY.

LINGER YET AWHILE

As you have seen a mother fondly fold
A tiny hand until, in slumber deep,
The clinging fingers loose their jealous hold,
And baby lies in sweet, unconscious sleep;

So, dear, be not impatient to depart,
While yet I dread the Dark and Silence so!
Wait on my weakness like the mother-heart,
And leave me only—when I can not know.

RECOMPENSE

She was not thoughtless, after all, who said,
 Wondering how habit made them so opaque,
“The people clamor that they have no bread:
 Why do they not eat cake?”

Kind were you, queen, and singularly wise.
 Bereft of every daily bread we rove;
But Oh! the dreams and starlight in our eyes!
 And Oh! the sweets of love!

Who to the nethermost abyss of loss,
 Must creep in anguish, mourning lack on lack,
Finds himself freed at last of every cross
 With bliss to waft him back!

PRAISE

I thank Thee, Lord, that I, who loved the sun,
 Have walked in shadows deepening as I went,
For one has clung to me—and only one—
 Who neither feared the dark, nor banishment.

I thank Thee, Lord, that I, in love with love—
 Bright butterfly whose life is but a span—
Learned, clutching vainly at the fickle thing, to prove
 How greater far is friendship, man to man.

I thank Thee, Lord, that I, who loved to skim
 The path of dalliance lightly as a bird,
In Thy vast desert wastes clasped hands with him
 Whose simple speech interpreted Thy word.

I thank Thee, Lord, though every gift hath end,
 Though all save one be fleeting as a breath.
Against all doubt and change shall friend and friend
 Prevail up to the very Gates of Death.

NIGHT IN THE MOUNTAINS

Steel blue, the serrated Sierra's ledge
Cuts sharp the heart of heaven, at whose edge
Slowly the sunset bleeds:—a sister sign
Of that which drains this wounded heart of mine.

Through scutate sky the javelin stars are pressed—
How like the arrowed griefs that pierce my breast!
As waits beleaguered Dark the rescuing Day,
So waits my soul what time you are away.

Ghost-shapen clouds; the west's ensanguined mere;
Cold winds that voice the old-time voiceless fear.
. . . The world and I can live, alone, with light,
But, in your absence! God! How black is night!

SHUT IN

When earth puts on her gay array,
And country roads are smiling,
While floral phalanx in relay
To bugle-breeze are filing,
 How throbs the pulse with quicker life,
 How march the feet to drum and fife,
As on some stirring holiday,
Too martial for beguiling!

But when the world puts on a frown,
And rain's unwelcome crismal,
From starless skies comes pouring down
Upon a gloom abysmal
 How softly love in languor lies,
 With poppy-petals on her eyes,
And laughs to call it dismal,
In a cozy nook, in town!

NEVER COMES SPRING

Forgotten? Ah, well, as the swift seasons speed,
Blushes the briar rose; ripens the seed;
Summer and winter their largesses bring,
But never comes spring to me: never comes spring!

Forgotten? Perhaps; other love folds me fast,
In pity to mantle the grief of the past;
Yet is my Memnon heart low murmuring
"Never comes spring to me: never comes spring!"

For what be the tranquil hopes of today,
When the heart has no youth and the year has no May?
To a life that is robbed of its tenderest thing,
There never comes spring again; never comes spring!

NEGATION

As she who folds an unworn robe, besprent
With tears, where had been christening drops instead,
Save that her still-born sonling's soul has sped
E'er the theologian could reason where it went,
Might mourn that Motherhood's sublime intent
Should be revealed to one so sore misled,
And choose a deeper anguish for the dead
If only had the babe been longer lent:

* * *

Such are the lives that scarce may own they're sad,
Yet know the brooding that turns young hearts old;
Lives wherein naught but doomed desires, grown cold,
Chill the drear wastes of physic tragedy;
Grey griefs, unlightened by bright memory—
Weak, wistful lives, that never lost—nor had!

WARNING

She stooped: Ah, her lips and her eyes were Youth,
While he was battered by wreck and ruth;
And he drained her lips and her spirit, too,
As a parched plant draws through and through
All its famished pores the precious dew.

Thus strength returned to the stricken man,
With fine-strung courage and fearless plan.
How he fought the foe with his old-time pride,
Of his splendid triumph, the whole world cried;
But the woman, empty, drooped and died.

He reveled in plaudits and scorned the thing
That bored, once he needed no minist'ring.
For this is the way the Fates ordain—
That a man may look on a woman's pain
As a wolf on the lamb his fangs have slain!

So heed, my daughters, and let him die
Who would drain your lips and your spirit dry.
Let him stand by the strength of his gods; and when
He wants no HELP, trust him, but not till then!
There be BABES to suckle—let MEN be MEN!

THE "OLD RED HILLS" OF GEORGIA

Let us hold deep in our souls always
The peace of one tender April day;
Life grows so sick of its throbs and thrills—
Wounded wings heal on the Old Red Hills,
Where listing breezes sweep clean the heart
Of its desert dust and the burning smart
Of memories twined with the thorns of pain;
Yea, when we sink from the stress and strain
Of thoughts that canker and care that kills,
Let us turn for strength to the Old Red Hills.

LAND'S END

Like giant fire-flies, the boats
Slip slowly over the bay,
While earth and moon are both afloat
In mingled murk and spray;

Are they as lost and lonely, dear,
As once were you and I,
Before we watched together here
At the edge of the sea and sky?

We know not the cruise of each voyager,
Nor when shall the sails be furled;
Each drifts alike through the same dim blur
That smothers a drifting world;

But whether the ships go down, or ride
Safe to the harbor gate,
They all are borne by a final tide
To the utmost brink of fate;

Sometimes when the blushing moon swings low
Till veiled from the stars in mist,
By the thrill in the hush of night we know
That she and the earth have kissed!

So breathe them God-speed, they who move
Through the clouds of the sky or sea:
May they meet at last that peace and love
Which have come to you and me!

THE ULTIMATE ANSWER

So little asked I, dear, of tenderness,
So slight a share of human happiness!
And you denied. 'T was then I begged release,
When lo! His mercy gave to me His peace.

If you should sometime whisper: "Death is past,
Rise to eternal recompense at last!"
Methinks my startled soul would weep, and pray
To rest forever in the mouldering clay.

Always my worship far too great for blame,
Through life or death, or Heaven or Hell, the same;
But, oh, sweetheart, I'd dare no more to try
Your love, that failed so, e'er I came to die.

LINES WITH A GIFT

Take, with the gift, such meed of song
As dumb lips croon when days are long;
Take of the flame of western skies,
That falls upon close-lidded eyes;
Take of the thought behind the thought,
Of which the ether link is wrought;
Take of the soul within the flesh,
Such fragment fingers may enmesh;
Take, for my heart's own broken sake,
The part you can not further break.

THE FLEETING GRAIL

Tho' you toy at the cup with dalliant lips,
Or drain it in swinish haste;
Tho' you taste it by stealth, thro' furtive sips,
Or spill with an open waste;
The lees are there at the last, my dear,
But the sparkle soon dies away;
Tho' the wine of love last a day or a year,
Its dregs are the price we pay.

Life springs no more from the mouldering grave,
Nor bud from a rose, full-blown;
Cling not to the knees of your gods, nor rave
That you cannot live alone!
The birth of the fairest thing, my dear,
Is marked with its own decay;
Tho' the sweets of love last a day or a year,
Their gall is the price we pay.

* * *

But lift the grail from the hand of Fate,—
We'll drink in the braver way;
For a year or a day let us live, elate,
Nor question the price we pay!

SEVERED

How may love span, if the Cross divide?
Fruitless the longing, ever;
Crushed, in the shade that it casts, I hide,
For the light glints all on the other side;
O the slender Cross, that is yet so wide
That naught may bridge it over!

Fare forth, beloved, in the heaven-sent light,
Nor pause at my parting moan;
Where the shadow falls that has made my night,
'Neath a dual Cross that can bless or blight,
Let me shrink just now from your pitying sight;
Fare forth, while I weep, alone!

BUILD ME A TINY DWELLING

Build me a tiny dwelling, friends of mine,
With some wee windows opening to the day,
Framed with a sturdy honeysuckle vine
On which a mischief-merry child may sway.
Burn for me candles sometimes. In the storm
That hides the moon and puts the stars to flight—
While you, with lamp-glow and with hearth-stone warm
Are comforted,—leave me not lonely in the night.
Let me stay close to all I used to know;
The kiss of lovers and the homely talk
Of housewives chattering along the row,
And tousled babies tumbling on the walk.
I yearn to hear the news that's going 'round;
The quaint opinions—quarrels—current joke;
The beat of marching feet; the queer, blurred sound
That rises from the crowd of human folk;
A street car clanging past a clattering dray;
A dishpan ringing on the kitchen floor;
The shrilling cries of urchins at their play;
Some mother singing near an open door;
I want to hear the factory whistles shriek
Demand that all the sleepy heads awake;
I, who can raise my lids no more, nor speak—
Ah, friends of old, you will not quite forsake?
I need not, motionless, this heavy fold
Of earth to bind me down, to bruise my breast.
For all its weight, it shuts not out the cold.
Since I must rest—in comfort let me rest.
Nothing I knew except the city-bred
Turbulent struggle, clamor, flaring sign:
How can I lie among these desolate dead,
Here in this solemn woodland, friends of mine?

“Peace?” I was at peace about my soul and God:
And thus—had time to spare for loving men.
Let them not prison me beneath the sod,
But place me near the thoroughfares again.
No willow tree, no stilted epitaph,
But just a little home, I pray you, give.
Where none will fear to linger, or to laugh
And share his life with one who loved to live.

INCOMPLETE

When those we worship spurn our fond intent,
And send us, starved, to bitter banishment,
How could we bear the exile, sorrow-pressed,
Save for the love of those who love us best?

So—if the long-adored shall suffer us
Ecstatically to love them—thus—and thus—
In joy, be humble. Haply they but rest
Their broken hearts with us who love them best.

For life preserves strange inequality,
Withholding ever half its golden fee;
The other may award some future quest,
When those we love, perhaps, may love us best!

THE HEALER

(It was a southern woman who, by placing flowers upon the grave of an unidentified Northern soldier, gave us Memorial day.)

Laden with tribute blossoms for her own,
Who lay, in honored sleep, beneath the stone,
She paused, beside an unmarked grave, and gave
Half of her flowers to a foeman's grave.

"In Southern soil, the Southland's heroes rest,
Embalmed in love by all that they loved best;
But—o'er this nameless clay—an alien sky,
And alien feet that pass, contemptuous, by."

So ran her heart's deep pity. Tho' no word
She spoke aloud, the reeling Nation heard!
And, sick of woundings, worn with bitter tears,
Began the patient, reconciling years.

HAUNTED

Then sit ye down, Sir Skeleton. The feast
Has chilled in vainly waiting thy retreat,
And I am weak and weary in defeat.
Since thou wilt not depart my roof, at least
Grant me to eat and drink and let me greet,
Sometimes, a face of flesh—a tender, sweet,
Pure living love, before my life must cease.

I hold thy horror blameless, 'tis of earth.
Thy grin sardonic means? Yea, I confess
I, too, was earthly in those sordid years!
So—yield our musty bond its mouldy worth,
But let me glean some meagre happiness,
Since fate hath reaped full harvest of my tears.

THE HOME PITIFUL

We coax the laughing little one from play,
And wheedle him, bright-eyed, into his gown;
Then teach our unaccustomed lips to say
The tales he lisps for, e'er we lay him down.

The dainty bed, the filmy, hand-wrought lace—
Her care, in each detail, is manifest;
The sunny curls, the baby face—**her** face—
In smiling sleep so blessed, so unblest.

For wealth of Love and wealth of Things has he,
Yet stranger-hearts tonight would o'er him grieve—
In blinding tears we deck the holly tree—
"His Mother dead. And it is Christmas Eve!"

EXHAUSTLESS

What message hath the sea?
"O peoples yet to be,
When earth hath borne its utmost yield,
Here lies a fallow field.

The full-tilled soil subsides,
Beneath my restless tides,
And, rested, rises fresh again
To minister to men."

What message hath my love,
Its quality to prove?
"Today gives all its tender yield,
Tomorrow lies, a fallow field;

Desire what you will—
Love shall each wish fulfill;
And, ever tireless, haste anew
In service unto you."

GONE VISITING.

Such a silence in the garden; such a stillness in the house;
In the warmest floods of sunshine there's a current of the
cold;
It's a false and vacant May-time, for it hasn't any play-time,
And I'm longing for my Sweetheart, four years old!

It's too peaceful in the darkness; it's too quiet in the day,
While the irk of empty leisure takes the zest from every
joy;
O the ache of loss has seized me for the tiny hands that
teased me,
And I want you back, my mischief-making boy!

There's no friendly jumble now between the books and toys
and things;
But an orderly arrangement that makes the whole place sad;
Hang these circumspect relations! Why must babies take
vacations?

The home is but a sepulchre without your laugh, wee
lad.

If the choo-choo train that took you should not bring you
back again,
Fate might fill my lap with favors-- fortune girdle me
with gold,
Yet my heart would still be lonely, still be needing, wanting
only
Its priceless, prankish Sweetheart, four years old!

A PRAYER

O nameless one to me, whom some call Lord,
My stiff, rebellious lips can frame no word
Of tender fawning, or of suppliance
My purposes have been at variance
So wide, with thy inscrutable demands
That mercy owes me nothing at thy hands.
Yet this, thy world, is in such bitter need
Of even me. Can peace be not decreed
That we may work awhile in fellowhood,
Nor strange, nor blasphemous, but for the good
To these, the suffering? When my life is spent,
Then mete thou, as thou wilt, my punishment.
Nay, even now, this only do I seek
For my own sake—**strength**. So I be not weak
I weep not for the pain, the wounds unhealed.
How, elsewise, could my soul have been annealed
Save by the fire of sin, the ice of scorn?
One who hath lost all that could make life dear
Hath nothing to expect; and naught to fear!
Despair grows god-like, when it makes one free!
The ego of the worm can rise to Thee . . .
Lend me such share of thine omnipotence
As others need—and take thy recompense!

THE RECKONING

One shall judge, when the day is over;
What though some finite law delay?
Tarry not now to carp or wonder,—
There shall be One to balance and weigh!

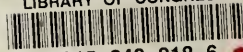
Has any wrong been your soul's undoing,
Or an idol too swiftly returned to clay?
Soft; let it pass. At the last reviewing,
There shall be One to balance and weigh!

Is there some secret, dark transgression
 Conscience would bring to the light of day?
Weak is the impulse for confession!
 There shall be One to balance and weigh!

Mourn you, too late, an indiscretion
 That changed the gold of some life to gray?
Still the remorse; in that life's completion ,
 There shall be One to balance and weigh!

One shall judge when the day is over,
 "Vengeance is mine. Yes, I will repay!"
What will the test of the scales discover,
 When there shall be One to balance and weigh?

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